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The Chiefs of the National Guard Bureau, 1908-2011

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FLARE

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FOREWORD

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) traces its origins to February 1908, when the War Department created a Division of Militia Affairs to handle the growing administrative load associated with transforming militia organizations into an effective combat reserve force of the United States Army. The first Chief of the Division was Colonel Erasmus Weaver, a Coast Artillery officer who served through 1911. It was renamed the Militia Bureau in June 1916 after passage of the landmark National Defense Act.

The early chiefs of the organization were all regular Army officers and graduates of the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, New York. That emphasis changed after the Congress, at the behest of National Guard interests in the states, changed the law in 1920 to mandate that, in the future, the Bureau's chief would be a senior Guard officer who would serve in the rank of major general in the U.S. Army.

The Bureau was renamed the National Guard Bureau by Congress in June 1933. For all of their frustrations with the Army and inadequate congressional funding during the interwar period, the Chiefs were able to call upon the states to field the largest military force in the country when the Guard was mobilized for federal service during 1940-1941. The National Guard made outstanding contributions to the global American military effort during World War II.

After the War, reduced to a skeleton staff, Major General John F. Williams mounted an effective campaign to block the desire of some Army planners to exclude the National Guard from the postwar federal military establishment. The Army's planned force however, included a new organization in 1947, the Air National Guard (ANG).

During the Cold War, the Office of the Chief continued relying on close alliances with the National Guard and Adjutants General associations as well as members of Congress to protect the Guard's political interests. They sought to improve the readiness and modernize the equipment of the National Guard so that it could better

perform its federal role as the Guard became part of the "Total Force" concept within the Armed Forces by the 1970s. Later, leaders saw that improved readiness for the federal role would enhance the Guard's ability to perform its state role. New "traditional missions," including counter-drug and youth programs that addressed social problems plaguing the United States, proved successful and raised the public profile of the Guard. Hence, the rank of Chief was elevated to that of Lieutenant General (three stars).

In the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, newly inaugurated Chief H Steven Blum was determined to make the NGB and state National Guard headquarters function jointly for a broad spectrum of threats. Blum's strategy for transforming the National Guard and enhancing its homeland security mission was based upon several key assumptions, such as using a strong effort to strengthen the credibility of the Guard's military readiness and having a say in the decision making associated with its organizational focus. Blum implemented far-reaching organizational restructuring initiatives early in his tour, transforming the NGB into a truly joint operation. More importantly, creation of a joint staff structure in the Bureau would facilitate working relationships and coordination with the DOD staff, the Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the staffs of the joint warfighting commands, like the United States Central Command.

But, Congress, not the Pentagon, took the lead in significantly overhauling the decision-making role of the National Guard Bureau and its Chief within the Defense Department. On January 28, 2008, President George W. Bush, a former Texas Air Guardsman, signed the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008" into law. It included a key amendment titled the "National Guard Empowerment Act of 2007," which significantly expanded the official role of the Bureau and its Chief. The major changes included elevating the Chief from three-star to four-star rank and changing the Bureau to become a joint activity of the Department of Defense, instead of a joint Bureau of the Army and the Air Force. The Chief became the principal advisor to the

Secretary of Defense on non-federalized National Guard forces and other matters determined by the Secretary of Defense via the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Secretary of Defense was directed to develop a charter for the Bureau that reflected the full scope of its duties and activities; it codified the NGB's function to facilitate and coordinate the use of National Guard personnel and resources during domestic emergencies, and reiterated the fact that the Bureau's Chief remained the principal advisor to the senior civilian and military leadership of the Army and Air Force on matters relating to the federal roles of the Army National Guard and Air National Guard.

As a result of the legislation, Lieutenant General Craig R. McKinley, a Florida Air Guardsman, was promoted to the rank of General by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in a Pentagon ceremony on November 17, 2008 and assumed his duties as Chief of the National Guard Bureau that same day.

The National Guard Bureau, its predecessors, and their Chiefs have enjoyed a significant, if little known, role in the transformation of the militia into the modern National Guard with its dual state and federal responsibilities. Since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, its advocacy and administration of National Guard programs have become increasingly critical as the United States has relied more and more heavily on its state soldiery to help fight the nation's wars abroad and protect Americans at home. Historically, the Chiefs and their staffs have labored to reconcile the sometimes conflicting demands of state and federal authorities. They have generally succeeded in developing and maintaining the National Guard as a combat reserve force of the Army and Air Force within the constraints of the manpower, equipment and funds made available by the federal government. Due in large part to the efforts of these Chiefs, the Guard as we now know it has become a strong operational force with powerful and far reaching combat-ready capabilities working with the Department of Defense.

CHARLES J. GROSS, Ph.D
Chief, Air National Guard History

Colonel Erasmus M. Weaver, Jr., U.S. Army

Colonel Erasmus M. Weaver, Jr., 1908-1911

Erasmus Weaver graduated from the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, Class of 1875. He moved to Charleston, South Carolina where he worked as Professor of Military Science at the Citadel, the South Carolina Military Academy, 1883-1885. He remained a lieutenant for 23 years before being promoted to captain. Weaver became instructor, Department of Chemistry, United States Military Academy, 1888-1891.

General Weaver was named the first Chief of the Division of Militia Affairs based in downtown Washington, D.C., where he served from 1908-1911. Under his tenure, the Division oversaw National Guard armament, equipment distribution, and organization throughout the United States.

After duty with the Division of Militia Affairs, he was elevated to the rank of Brigadier General and served as Chief of the Coast Artillery, 1911-1916, and was noted as one of the fathers of the modern artillery.

Weaver died November 13, 1920.

Brigadier General Robert K. Evans, U.S. Army

Brigadier General Robert K. Evans, 1911-1912

Robert Evans graduated from the United States Military Academy, class of 1875. After being commissioned as a second lieutenant, he served as part of the guard at Alcatraz Island, 1877. Following duty at different posts in the west, General Evans served at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, 1891-1892. Evans then served as military attaché to the American Embassy in Berlin from 1892-1896.

Evans' various campaigns include the Indian War and the Spanish-American War. His service included El Caney, San Juan, Santiago, 1898; and the Philippine Insurrection, 1899-1900. For service in the Philippines, he received the Silver Star with one oak leaf cluster. General Evans commanded several units, including the Department of the Gulf in Atlanta, Georgia from 1912-1914; and the 2nd Brigade in Laredo, Texas from 1915-1916. Brigadier Gen. Robert K. Evans commanded the US Army, Pacific (Hawaiian Department) during 1916. He retired in 1916, only to be recalled to command the Philippine Department in Manila from 1917-1918. Evans died on July 31, 1926.

Major General Albert L. Mills, U.S. Army

Major General Albert L. Mills, 1912-1916

Albert Mills graduated from the United States Military Academy, class of 1879, and then served in the Indian Territory (later Oklahoma) from 1879-1885.
He was later a professor of Military Science and Tactics at The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina, 1886-87.
Twice he was commended for actions in the Spanish-American War, participating in the Santiago, Las Guasimas, and San Juan campaigns.
Mills received the Medal of Honor for distinguished gallantry near Santiago, Cuba, July 1, 1898. During this action, intimately known as "the charge up San Juan Hill," Major General Mills (then a captain) was leading a detachment up Kettle Hill when he was shot through the head. Although temporarily blinded, he continued to command his men. After this action, he was absent from duty until August 1898 while recovering from the effects of those wounds.
After returning to duty, Mills was appointed Superintendent, United States Military Academy, a position he held until August 31, 1906. During his term at West Point, Mills initiated numerous changes, including the practical suppression of hazing and the expansion of the Military Academy.
Mills became Chief of the Division of Militia Affairs in 1912 and continued his energetic work. He stated, "In view of the of the prospective legislation (the National Defense Act of 1916), which will probably require a complete reorganization of the National Guard, I feel that I must leave the Division of Militia Affairs in the hands of someone thoroughly conversant with the needs and conditions of the National Guard."

Major General William A. Mann, U.S. Army

Major General William A. Mann, 1916-1917

Major General William A. Mann was a graduate of the United States Military Academy, class of 1875. A career military man, he participated in the Pine Ridge Indian Campaign with the 17th Infantry, 1890-91. He accompanied his regiment to Cuba during the Spanish-American War, and took part in the battle of El Caney and the siege of Santiago. Mann was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action.

After fighting in the Philippine Insurrection, Mann was promoted to major in 1904 and returned for duty at the Army War College, Washington Barracks, D.C., graduating the following year.

Mann followed these assignments with others in Montana and South Dakota, and by 1911 he was shuttled to the Army General Staff. In 1915, he was assigned to command the 1st Brigade in Albany, NY, receiving a promotion to brigadier general. In 1916 Mann assumed command of the School of Musketry and Field Artillery in Laredo, TX.

He was named Chief of the Militia Bureau by the War Department in 1916. Mann then left the Bureau in November, 1917 to command the 42nd (Rainbow) Division, composed of National Guard elements from 26 states and the District of Columbia. However, Mann did not pass his physical examination, so he was removed from command of the Rainbow Division.

After his return to the United States, Mann commanded the Department of the East under old Army force structure, and then retired in 1918, at age 64. General Mann retired in New York City, then moved to Washington, D.C. where he died in 1934 at age 80.

Major General Jessie McIlvane Carter, U.S. Army

Major General Jessie McIlvane Carter, 1917-1921

Jessie McIlvane Carter, a native of St. Francois County, Missouri, was a graduate of the United States Military Academy, class of 1886. He served as a duty officer in assignments in Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American War from 1899-1901, as well as the Philippines from 1903-05, until he was reassigned to the mainland in 1905.

Major General Carter was the last regular Army officer to hold the position of Chief of the Militia Bureau. Carter was a great supporter of the National Guard, but saw much room for necessary reforms. Carter believed that, "one of the greatest obstacles to efficiency in the National Guard is the failure of states to appoint or elect properly qualified military men as Adjutants General of the States." Major General Carter wanted the National Guard to remain under state control, but wanted Regular Army officers appointed as State Adjutants General.

Carter left the Bureau temporarily to command the 11th Division, based at Ft. Meade, MD during World War I. In his tenure, he fought complaints against larger Army attempts to control militia policy, and aimed to have states orient their own Guard units. However, the National Guard gained a large victory through passage of the 1920 National Defense Act, which outlined that only National Guard officers could serve as Chief of the Militia Bureau, and that the Guard would be the primary reserve component in the United States military.

Carter died June 23, 1930, just two days after word that his promotion to the rank of major general became effective.

Major General George C. Rickards, U.S. Army

Major General George C. Rickards, 1921-1925

Major General George Rickards also holds the distinction of the first Chief of the Militia Bureau and its successor organizations to serve as a general officer in the National Guard. And he holds the distinction of having the longest continuous service of any person in the history of the Pennsylvania National Guard, among officer or enlisted ranks.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Rickards served as a lieutenant colonel commanding the 16th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment as it mobilized in his home state. During Mexican Border Service, from July 1916 through January 1917, Rickards also commanded the same unit as a colonel alongside the 4th Pennsylvania Brigade.

Rickards was then ordered into federal service as the commander of the 112th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, during World War I. Additionally, Rickards served as Acting Commander of the 56th Infantry Brigade in September 1918. He participated in all the campaigns of the 112th in France, including Champagne-Marne; Aisne-Marne; Oise-Marne; Meuse-Argonne; Champagne, and Lorraine, 1918. General Rickards received the Distinguished Service Medal for meritorious service during the First World War.

He was mustered out of service in May 1919, and promoted to brigadier general in anticipation of the reorganization of the 28th Division. He assumed the office of Chief in October 1921, lasting through 1925, in a career that spanned six decades.

Rickards retired and returned to Pennsylvania. He died on January 16, 1933, at age 72.

Major General Creed C. Hammond, U.S. Army

Major General Creed C. Hammond, 1925-1929

Creed Hammond enlisted in the Oregon National Guard in April, 1892 and discharged to enlist in the regular Army in 1895. From there, he re-enlisted into the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Nebraska National Guard. With the declaration of war against Spain, Hammond was called into federal service in May, 1898 through August, 1899, discharged as a first sergeant. Hammond also saw action in Philippine Insurrection, and was part of the Manila, Malolos, and San Isidro campaigns.

Hammond earned an officer's commission as second lieutenant in the Oregon National Guard on March 19, 1901. He advanced through commissioned grades, becoming a colonel in the Coast Artillery Corps from July 25, 1917 through April 19, 1919. Hammond later came to the Militia Bureau as an Assistant to the Chief, Militia Bureau, in 1922.

After the term of Major General George Rickards ended in June, 1925, and with widespread gubernatorial support from across the country, Hammond was named Chief. Hammond's term in the post was marked by gains in aircraft equipment, participation in armory drills, and field camps, contrasting against stagnating personnel gains and a lack of military preparation present among the Army and National Guard as a whole.

He served through 1929, afterwards serving as Comptroller-General in the Philippines during the Herbert Hoover administration.

He died in his home state of Oregon in April, 1940.

Major General William G. Everson, U.S. Army

Major General William G. Everson, 1929-1931

Originally from Ohio, William G. Everson enlisted in the Indiana National Guard as a 19 yr old on April 22, 1898. With the start of the Spanish-American War three days later, he was immediately ordered into federal service with the 158th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment until November 4, 1898.

He then served as regimental sergeant major, 2nd Indiana Infantry, 1900-1903. During this time, Everson studied at Franklin College of Indiana, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1903. Everson was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the Indiana National Guard on May 19, 1905. Everson continued his schooling, earning a Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Newton Theological Institute in Massachusetts in 1908. He worked in a civilian capacity as an ordained minister, and even served as a National Guard chaplain.

After the start of World War I, he was ordered into federal service with the 152nd Infantry as a major on August 17, 1917. Everson served in Italy, Dalmatia, Serbia, and Montenegro with the 332nd Infantry, 83rd Division. Everson was discharged from federal service on April 29, 1919 as a lieutenant colonel. He was promoted to brigadier general and commander, 76th Brigade, 38th Division, Indiana National Guard, November, 1922. Everson then became Indiana's Adjutant General, making him the first AG to become Chief, National Guard Bureau.

General Everson accepted the position as Chief, National Guard Bureau in 1929. With the Stock Market crash in 1929, recruiting numbers skyrocketed as men sought part time employment and defense budgets shrunk. He resigned the position in November, 1931.

Major General William G. Everson died in 1954.

Major General George E. Leach, U.S. Army

Major General George E. Leach, 1931-1935

A native of Minneapolis, George Leach was commissioned a second lieutenant, Field Artillery on April 15, 1905, in the Minnesota National Guard. He saw duty on the Mexican Border as a major, and later as Colonel, in Field Artillery from June, 1916-February, 1917. He commanded the 151st Field Artillery, 42nd Division, August 5, 1917-July 14, 1918, seeing action in Champagne-Marne, Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne.

For service in World War I, Leach received the Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal, and Purple Heart, in addition to other awards and commendations.

Upon his return to the States, Leach was appointed commander, 151st Field Artillery, November, 1921. His professional career then was occupied, however, by the fact that he was elected mayor of Minneapolis, during which time he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general, and later, major general.

He was then appointed as Chief of the National Guard Bureau in 1931. With the Great Depression crippling the national economy, the Guard Bureau was subjected to massive budget cuts. He is also remembered for advocating motorization of Guard equipment as a cost-saving measure, as the cost of maintaining horses for cavalry duty and using other support machinery was very high. After duty as Chief, National Guard Bureau, he returned to command the 59th Field Artillery Brigade, 34th Division, until 1940.

Leach exemplified Citizen-Soldier leadership to a greater extent as he served as mayor from 1921-1929 amidst outrageous accusations perpetrated by political opponents against his administration, and remarkably, won election to the office again in 1937, serving through 1941.

Leach died in 1951.

Major General Albert H. Blanding, U.S. Army

Major General Albert H. Blanding, 1936-1940

Blanding began his military career by enlisting in the Gainesville Guards of the Florida State Troops in 1895. In 1899, he was commissioned a captain in the Florida National Guard. As a colonel, Blanding commanded troops during the national call up of the Guard to the Mexican Border in 1916- 1917. With the onset of World War I, Blanding was one of only eight National Guard officers promoted by President Woodrow Wilson to the rank of brigadier general. As commander of the 53rd Brigade, 27th Division, he participated in the Somme and Celle River campaigns. For his action during the Somme campaign he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for leading an attack on the Hindenburg Line.

In 1924, Blanding became brigadier general, and commander of the 31st Division. In 1936, President Roosevelt appointed Blanding as Chief, National Guard Bureau. During this time, with the U.S. in the midst of an economic depression alongside rising pacifist sentiment, Blanding overcame dire forecasts for the Guard. During his tenure, he convinced the President to call for a buildup of National Guard strength and equipment, and the number of Guard officers attending Army schools greatly increased.

Although these proposals met resistance, Blanding knew that the Guard had to build its basic inventory in order to counter the oncoming threat of World War. The National Guard possessed no anti-tank weapons, and averaged only two tanks per division. The Guard in 1940 was not at all a satisfactory fighting force, yet Blanding had started initiating reform and laid into place the building blocks of a readily deployed reserve force.

Blanding died in 1970, at age 94, long noted as one of Florida's most distinguished soldiers. Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, the Florida National Guard's primary military reservation, was named in his honor.

Major General John F. Williams, U.S. Army

Major General John F. Williams, 1940-1946

John F. Williams was born in 1887. He enlisted in the Missouri National Guard as a private on March 18, 1903, and was honorably discharged on September 1, 1904. Williams continued his education at the University of Missouri at Columbia, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism in 1911.

Williams was appointed a first lieutenant, Infantry, Missouri National Guard, on April 2, 1917. He was ordered into federal service during the First World War as Adjutant General, 128th Machine Gun Battalion, 35th Division, August, 1917-September, 1919. Williams was promoted to major, Coast Artillery on June 8, 1921, then appointed colonel and commander, 128th Field Artillery, on April 28, 1923. He was promoted to major general and Chief, National Guard Bureau, in 1940.

He served as Chief for the duration of the Second World War, as well as immediately after the War during the initial reorganization of the National Guard in 1946 and beyond. Major General Butler Miltonberger succeeded General Williams in 1946.

He retired thereafter, moving to California. He died at age 66, on May 29, 1953.

Major General Butler B. Miltonberger, U.S. Army

Major General Butler B. Miltonberger, 1946-1947

Butler Miltonberger enlisted in the Nebraska National Guard in 1916, and was called to duty for Mexican Border Service that same year. Afterward, in World War I, Miltonberger saw action with the 4th Infantry Division in the Argonne Forest and returned to the United States as a first sergeant.

On May 12, 1923, he was appointed as first lieutenant in the Nebraska National Guard. In 1940, he commanded the 134th Infantry, 35th Infantry Division. Later, during the Second World War, Miltonberger saw action in St. Lo, Vire, Mortain, Montargis, Marhange, Sarreguemines, Bastogne, Alsace, Venlo, and the Elbe River. During his duty in the European Theater, he received the Legion of Merit, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with three oak clusters, and the French Legion of Honor, along with several other commendations.

In 1945, as a Brigadier General, he was made Assistant Division Commander of the 35th Infantry Division. He became Chief of the National Guard Bureau in 1946. His mission became to re-establish the National Guard as a trained, equipped, and deployable force. He instituted a national advertising campaign that encouraged recruitment, the first such program in National Guard history.

By August 1, 1947, when forced to retire due to health concerns, there were more than 100,000 enlisted and commissioned soldiers in the National Guard. More than 40% of the units planned by Miltonberger had been federally recognized, and another 20% organized. He headed the Miltonberger Board of 1950, a team of present and former National Guard officers that reviewed internal operations and force structure. Instead of recommending a separate National Guard Bureau specifically for the Air National Guard, the Board suggested an implementation of procedures that would ease cross-service tensions. It led to the creation of a Joint NGB, a strategy that proved helpful in the decades that followed.

While illness forced him to resign the office of Chief, Miltonberger lived another 30 years, until 1977.

Major General Kenneth F. Cramer, U.S. Army

Major General Kenneth F. Cramer, 1947-1950

Kenneth Cramer began his military career in 1917 when he attended Officers Training Camp and was commissioned as a second lieutenant on August 15 of that year. In World War I, Cramer saw action in St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne, where he was wounded in action and taken as a prisoner of war. After war's end, he joined the Officers' Reserve Corps and was appointed captain in the Connecticut National Guard in 1931.

Cramer entered federal service in 1941 with the 43rd Infantry Division as a colonel. He was transferred to the 24th Infantry Division and then promoted to brigadier general and assistant division commander in 1942. During the War, General Cramer received the Silver Star with three oak leaf clusters, the Bronze Star, and the Air Medal. He was made division commander in 1945.

Following the War, Cramer commanded the 43rd Infantry Division, 1946-47. His term as Chief of the National Guard was marked by controversy with the Director of the Air National Guard, General George Finch. Following an investigation by the inspectors General of the Army and Air Force, General Cramer asked to be relieved of his duties of Chief, National Guard Bureau so that he could command the 43rd Infantry Division as it was called into federal service at the outset of the Korean War in 1950.

General Cramer commanded the 43rd Infantry Division, which was sent to Germany to bolster NATO defense throughout the Korean War. After the signing of the Armistice in July, 1953, he returned to the United States.

Cramer died in February, 1954.

Major General Raymond H. Fleming, U.S. Army

Major General Raymond H. Fleming, 1950-1953

Raymond Fleming enlisted in the Louisiana National Guard and served as a sergeant on the Mexican Border in 1916. He was then commissioned a second lieutenant in the 141st Field Artillery, New Orleans' famed Washington Artillery. He served in France in 1917 during World War I.

After the War, Fleming commanded Battery A, 141st Field Artillery; between 1920-1928, he was promoted through the officer ranks from captain to brigadier general. Governor Huey Long appointed Fleming as Adjutant General of Louisiana on July 18, 1928. Fleming worked hard to see that Guard installations improved and innovative training procedures were instituted. Fleming became Louisiana director of the Selective Service System in 1940, and also continued his post as Louisiana Adjutant General. After the end of World War II, he assumed command of the 39th Infantry Division, which included troops from Louisiana and Arkansas; he was promoted to major general the following year. General Fleming then came to the National Guard Bureau in 1948 to serve as Chief of the Army Division, National Guard Bureau. In 1950 he took over the office of Chief, National Guard Bureau, through 1953.

Fleming then returned to Louisiana to once again serve as Adjutant General, a position he held for 24 years. Aside from another turn as Chief of the Army Division of the Guard from 1960-1964, Fleming spent most of his career as Louisiana Adjutant General. He is honored with Fleming Hall, located on the compound of Jackson Barracks installation, the Joint Forces Headquarters of the Louisiana National Guard in New Orleans.

Fleming died in New Orleans, Louisiana on November 23, 1974.

Major General Edgar C. Erickson, U.S. Army

Major General Edgar C. Erickson, 1953-1959

Edgar Erickson enlisted in the Massachusetts National Guard in April, 1914 and served on the Mexican Border as a private in 1916. After returning to his home state, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant of Infantry in 1917 and was promoted to first lieutenant the following year. Remarkably, Erickson reorganized the Infantry company under which he served as an enlisted soldier in 1920 after attaining the rank of captain.

Erickson continued his impressive rise through the ranks of the National Guard, and was appointed brigadier general in 1937. He commanded the 52nd Infantry Brigade through 1940, and was then named Adjutant General for Massachusetts. After this, he accepted a demotion to the rank of colonel in 1942, in order to serve in active duty status in World War II.

Still serving within the Infantry branch, Erickson served stateside into 1944, and then in the Pacific theater, seeing combat once again and serving in various assignments with the Chinese Army within the Chinese Combat Command. His service won him the honors of the National Government of the Republic of China, in addition to other awards. Upon return to the United States in 1946, Erickson accepted a special assignment as a Board Member of the Army Discharge Review Board. The following year, he was tasked to work for the National Guard Bureau.

Erickson worked in several capacities, including Acting Chief of the Army Division of the National Guard from September, 1950 through October, 1951. He later was named Chief, National Guard Bureau in 1953 and promoted to the rank of major general. Erickson stepped down from the Chief's post in 1959, retiring after five decades of military service.

Erickson died in Rutland, Vermont on March 31, 1989.

Major General Donald W. McGowan, U.S. Army

Major General Donald W. McGowan, 1959-1963

McGowan enlisted in the New Jersey National Guard in time to serve along the Mexican Border in 1916. Only 16, he proved an able soldier. He was promoted through the non-commissioned ranks prior to going to Europe with the 29th Infantry Division after the United States entered World War I. As a battalion sergeant major, McGowan served in the Meuse-Argonne and Ardennes campaign.

Upon his return to the States, McGowan entered the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1918, but resigned in 1919 to join the New Jersey National Guard. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1922, and moved up the officer ranks to lieutenant colonel in 1936. Here, McGowan also served as Assistant Adjutant General of New Jersey through 1941.

McGowan was called into federal service in 1941 to command the 102nd Cavalry Regiment. With the 29th Division, the 102nd took part in the assault on Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He served as Provost Marshal in the Normandy Base Section, which later included the regions of Britanny, the Lower Seine, Belgium, and the Netherlands. After returning to the United States in 1946, he served as Assistant Adjutant General of New Jersey through 1948.

McGowan returned to command another large unit as a Major General, the 50th Armored Division based in New Jersey, from 1948-1955. That year, he was assigned to the National Guard Bureau as the Chief of the Army Division (later known as the Director, Army National Guard), a position in which McGowan served until 1959. He then was named Chief, National Guard Bureau.

During McGowan's term as Chief, in the height of the Cold War, the National Guard mobilized over 65,000 soldiers and airmen during the 1961 Berlin Crisis. It also incorporated Nike missiles into the force structure of the Guard. In addition, Special Forces units were established in the Army National Guard, and the Reorganization Objectives Army Division (ROAD) took place to better focus efforts in training and functionality.

McGowan died September 24, 1967.

Major General Winston P. Wilson, U.S. Air Force

Major General Winston P. Wilson, 1963-1971

Winston Wilson, a native Arkansan, began his military career in 1929 when he enlisted as an airplane mechanic in the 154th Observation Squadron of the Arkansas National Guard. Wilson remained in the non-commissioned ranks through the 1930s until he finished officer training in 1940 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He was rated as a Junior Aircraft Observer, and after only a year in the position, was promoted to first lieutenant at the 154th Squadron.

In 1942, Wilson was selected by the Air Support Branch for assignment at the Headquarters of Army Air Corps, in Washington, D.C., and later was rated as a service pilot by May, 1943. This ultimately led to him being promoted to the rank of major by the end of that year.

Wilson served as Commanding Officer of the 16th Photo Squadron in October, 1944, whose mission it was to map and chart missions in South America, Alaska, and the continental United States. He then moved onto another assignment as Assistant Air Photo Officer, Headquarters Far East Air Force, in the Philippines. He gained another promotion, to lieutenant colonel, in November, 1945, followed by a new assignment as Chief of the Reconnaissance Unit, A-3, which was split between Tokyo and Manila after the end of World War II.

Wilson ended his federal duty in July, 1946, and rejoined the Arkansas National Guard, serving in the 154th Fighter Squadron in Little Rock, and on the Air Operations and Training Staff. He was called to the National Guard Bureau, Washington, D.C, and promoted to colonel in 1951. He became Acting Chief of the Air Force Division in 1953, and soon thereafter, a brigadier general.

Wilson became Deputy Chief, National Guard Bureau, in 1955, and finally in 1963, he was appointed Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the first Air Guard officer to serve as CNGB. He was reappointed in 1967, and became the first Chief to serve two terms in his own right. During difficult conditions in the Vietnam War, Wilson made strides to improve mobility and training, and saw to it that the Guard's readiness always improved.

Wilson died in Memphis, Tennessee on December 31, 1996.

Major General Francis S. Greenlief, U.S. Army

Major General Francis S. Greenlief, 1971-1974

Francis Greenlief, a native of Hastings, Nebraska, started his military career in 1940 when he enlisted in the Nebraska National Guard in his hometown. By December of that year, he was ordered to active duty with the Company "G" of the 134th Infantry Regiment, as a corporal. He entered Infantry Officer Candidate School (OCS) in May 1942, and soon was named Acting Company First Sergeant. After OCS, Greenlief earned his officer's commission, as a second lieutenant.

Greenlief shipped out to Europe with the 134th Infantry, and was involved in combat throughout the Theater: Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, and the Ardennes. He received the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and Purple Heart with three oak clusters, along with other decorations. His Nebraska unit fought in some of the bloodiest firefights in France and western Europe.

Upon return to the States, Greenlief was released from active duty in 1946, but rejoined his old unit this time as commanding officer in November, 1947. He worked in several capacities with the Nebraska Guard, including Assistant Chief of Staff and Assistant Adjutant General. Eventually he became Chief of Staff of the 35th Infantry Division, reaching the rank of colonel by 1957.

In 1960, Greenlief was ordered to active duty at the National Guard Bureau, Washington, D.C., as Executive Officer to the Assistant Chief of the Guard Bureau. He became Assistant Chief for the Army National Guard as a brigadier general by 1962 and was then promoted to Deputy Chief in 1963. Greenlief then was promoted to major general in 1965, and reappointed Deputy in 1967.

Finally, in 1971, Greenlief won appointment as Chief of the National Guard Bureau. His tenure was marked by final days of the Vietnam War, and the start of the transition of the National Guard into the Total Force structure, as founded by Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird.

Greenlief died December 18, 1999.

Lieutenant General La Vern E. Weber, U.S. Army

Lieutenant General La Vern E. Weber, 1974-1982

La Vern Weber hailed from the small community of Lone Wolf, Oklahoma, and retired as the first three-star Chief in the history of the National Guard.

His military career started in 1942, when enlisted in the US Marine Corps Reserve (USMCR) shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Territory. He graduated from Officer Candidate School in 1945, and was soon thereafter ordered to active duty through May, 1946.

General Weber left the US Marine Corps Reserve in 1948 when he accepted an appointment as a second lieutenant in the Oklahoma Army National Guard. He then served in the Korean War with the 180th Infantry, 45th Infantry Division, and was promoted to major in 1952, the same year he was released from active duty.

Weber graduated from the US Army Command and General Staff College in December 1955. He was assigned as Assistant Intelligence Officer, 45th Infantry Division. Weber was promoted to lieutenant colonel in May 1959, and then was assigned as Chief of Personnel, 45th Infantry Division in 1961. He then was promoted to colonel along with his new assignment as Chief of Staff, 45th Infantry Division, in 1964.

From 1965-1971, Weber served as Oklahoma Adjutant General, at the rank of major general. He then was named Director, Army National Guard, a position he kept through 1974 when he was named Chief, National Guard Bureau.

Weber was appointed for a second term as Chief in 1978. Then, in 1979, he was the first general officer promoted to the three-star billet in National Guard, after the US Army Chief of Staff elevated the position effective June 29th, 1979. Weber served as Chief through 1982, and after retiring, became Executive Director of the National Guard Association and a consultant on national defense matters.

General Weber died in Perry, Oklahoma on December 30, 1999.

Lieutenant General Emmett H. Walker, Jr.,

Lieutenant General Emmett H. Walker, Jr., 1982-1986

Abbott, Mississippi native Emmett H. "Mickey" Walker, Jr. enlisted in the US Army in December 1942, and attended Officer Candidate School at Ft. Benning, Georgia. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in May 1944, and went on to serve with the 95th Infantry Division. He earned a Silver Star and a Bronze Star with "V" device for his valor on the battlefield.

Walker left active service in 1946, and then went on to join the Mississippi National Guard as a first lieutenant in 1949. He was ordered into active duty during the Korean War as a captain, in the 31st Infantry Division, working under the Far East Command Headquarters, Japan, 1951-1952.

After the Korean Armistice was signed in July 1953, Walker returned to Mississippi National Guard. He filled various assignments within the 31st Infantry Division through the 1950s. He later assumed command of the 4th Howitzer Battalion, 114th Field Artillery, and the 631st Artillery Group. As commander of the 4th Howitzer unit, Walker was promoted to the rank of colonel in February 1968.

Walker was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in 1972, when he was tapped to be Assistant Adjutant General of the Mississippi National Guard. In 1976, he was to relocate to Washington D.C. as Special Assistant to the Director of the Army National Guard. Shortly thereafter, he became the Deputy Director of the Army National Guard as a brigadier general of the line. Walker then became Director of the Army National Guard in 1978.

At the end of the term of LTG La Vern Weber in 1982, Walker was named Chief, National Guard Bureau, and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general. His term was marked by a period of growth in the National Guard that coincided with the expansion of military spending during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. After retirement in 1986, General Walker also remained active with the National Guard Association of the United States.

Walker died in Arlington VA, on December 11, 2007.

Lieutenant General Herbert R. Temple, Jr.,

Lieutenant General Herbert R. Temple, Jr., 1986-1990

Los Angeles native Herbert Temple enlisted in the California Army National Guard in June, 1947 and served in the 160th Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division. After the start of hostilities in Korea, he was ordered to active duty as a non-commissioned officer, assigned to the 24th Infantry Division. In combat action, he received the Korean Service Medal with one Bronze Service Star, along with other decorations.

Upon discharge in 1952, Temple rejoined the California National Guard and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in October, 1952. From there, he made an impressive rise through the ranks of the "Sunshine" Division, the 40th Infantry Division, starting as a platoon leader and commander of Company "C." His branch was changed to Armor in 1955, where he continued as Company Commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combat Command A, 40th Armored Division. He then served as Headquarters Commandant, Assistant Administrative Officer, and Acting Administrative Officer for the Division.

During his career progression, Temple attended the Associate Armor Company Officer Course and Career Course, as well as the Command and General Staff College. Later he completed Armed Forces Staff College and National War College. By June, 1966, he was transferred to Divisional Support Command, serving as battalion commander of the 40th Supply and Transportation Battalion, and the 3rd Battalion, 160th Infantry, 40th Infantry Brigade (Separate).

Governor Ronald Reagan appointed Temple as Military Assistant, a post he served in from 1968-1971. He then went to the 49th Infantry Brigade as Deputy Commander from 1971 through 1974, after which time he was named Commander of the 3rd Brigade, 40th Infantry Division. Temple moved onto the National Guard Bureau, where he served as Chief of Offices of Mobilization Readiness and Policy and Liaison from 1975-78, followed by stints as Deputy Director and Director of the Army National Guard from 1978-86.

General Temple assumed the office of Chief, National Guard Bureau in 1986. During his tenure, strength in the National Guard grew to its highest level in history of over 525,000 Guardsmen and its training expanded greatly.

Lieutenant General John B. Conaway, U.S. Air Force

Lieutenant General John B. Conaway, 1990-1994

John Conaway, a native of Kentucky, began his military career through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of Evansville, Indiana. Commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force upon graduation in 1956, Conaway completed pilot and combat crew training by 1958. After briefly serving as a fighter-interceptor pilot in the Air Defense Command, he joined the West Virginia National Guard in 1960.

After transferring to the Kentucky National Guard, Conaway was assigned to the 123rd Tactical Response Wing based in Louisville. He then became an air technician flying training instructor.

He was called into active duty in January 1968 and went on to serve in Alaska, Panama, Japan and Korea. His tour ended in June 1969, whereupon he returned to work as operations officer for the 123rd TRW. By 1972, Conaway was appointed Air Commander of the Kentucky Air National Guard; two years later, he was named Vice Commander of his wing, which housed units in Arkansas, Nevada, and Idaho, in addition to his home base.

Conaway was recalled again to active duty in April, 1977, when he was tapped to be Deputy Director of the Air National Guard. In 1981, Conaway was promoted to the Director position, where he served one term and was reappointed in 1985. He then became the first Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau in July, 1988. He was promoted to the position of Chief, National Guard Bureau, with the resignation of LTG Herbert Temple, Jr. in 1990. Conaway oversaw the largest mobilization of the Guard since World War II during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990-91. His tenure is also marked by innovation through public outreach programs such as the State Partnership and Youth Challenge Programs .

Lieutenant General Edward D. Baca, U. S. Army

Lieutenant General Edward D. Baca, 1994-1998

Edward Baca is a native of Santa Fe, New Mexico. He joined the New Mexico Army National Guard in 1956, enlisting with Battery C, 726th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion in his hometown. He served in the enlisted corps for six years then graduated from Officer Candidate School in 1962. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant and served as a platoon leader for the 3631st Maintenance Company, New Mexico National Guard.

Baca volunteered for an active duty assignment with the acceleration of the Vietnam conflict in 1964. He served as Maintenance Shop Officer with the 85th Ordinance Company. After release from active duty, he returned to the New Mexico National Guard in 1966 to command the 3631st Maintenance Company. During the 1960s, the state unit found itself deployed on state active duty on multiple occasions, stemming from incidents of civil unrest that were common in New Mexico and the rest of the United States.

After his tenure with the unit, Baca moved into positions at the state level, working first as State Military Personnel Officer in 1977, then as State Command Administrative Officer in 1979. Baca also worked for the Chief of the National Guard's National Personnel Advisory Committee.

In 1983, Baca was named New Mexico Adjutant General. Under his leadership, the overall state of readiness of the New Mexico National Guard improved and was well-suited for the first federal action in 1990-91 during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The air defense component training, in particular, was of high quality to the degree that the Guard was also training active duty Air Defense personnel. He served as AG until 1994, when he was appointed Chief, National Guard Bureau.

Baca's time as Chief was highlighted by growth in support programs for soldiers and airmen, as well as initiatives that stretched beyond the operational readiness and maintenance of the fighting force. Although the Guard faced cutbacks in funding and strength with the Cold War ending, it focused on domestic operations in the wake of major floods and hurricanes. It also accepted new challenges such as the Bosnia peacekeeping mission in 1995.

Lieutenant General Russell Davis, U.S. Air Force

Lieutenant General Russell Davis, 1999-2002

Russell Davis hails from Tuskegee, Alabama. He began his military career as an aviation cadet in the US Air Force in 1958, training at Air Force bases in Florida, Oklahoma, and Kansas. He became a strategic bombardment pilot and then assigned as a bomber pilot and aircraft commander at Lincoln Air Force Base, Nebraska.

After Davis' tenure at Lincoln AFB ended in 1965, he was promoted to the rank of captain. He left active duty to accept a slot with the Iowa Air National Guard, as a pilot for the 124th Fighter Interceptor Squadron based at Des Moines. He worked through the ranks at the 124th through 1977, when he became Officer in Charge, 132nd Tactical Fighter Wing Command Post.

Davis worked at the 132nd for over a year before becoming Deputy Commander, Operations at Iowa National Guard headquarters in Des Moines. Then, in 1979, Davis was named Deputy Chief, Manpower and Personnel located at the Air National Guard headquarters at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland.

Davis continued his career path by working as the Executive Officer for LTG La Vern Weber from 1980-82. He was then named Wing Commander of the 113th Tactical Fighter Wing of the District of Columbia Air National Guard. He served in this capacity for eight years, working also as an assistant to the commander through 1991, and in his final assignment at state level became Commanding General, District of Columbia National Guard, which he held through 1995.

Davis, now a general officer, was named Vice Chief of the Guard Bureau that year. In 1998, he was named Chief, National Guard Bureau, a position that he held through 2002. The country endured the 9/11 attacks in 2001, which mobilized the National Guard for homeland security missions across the nation. It also subsequently opened larger deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan within that decade.

Lieutenant General H Steven Blum, U.S. Army

Lieutenant General H Steven Blum, 2003-2008

Blum is a native of Baltimore, Maryland. After graduating from the University of Baltimore with a Bachelor's degree in History in 1968, he joined the Maryland National Guard on a part-time basis. Commissioned in 1971, he joined a Special Forces detachment in Maryland. Following this, he worked for the 19th and 20th Special Forces through 1976.

After a stint with the recruiting and retention detachment, Blum rejoined the 20th Special Forces in 1977 and commanded an operational Detachment A. He later moved on to a position as Operations Officer. Blum then moved forward with several training positions with the Maryland National Guard until October, 1982 when he was named Director of Plans at headquarters level. He also served as Mobilization Operations Officer, and Battalion Commander for the 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division shortly after the 29th was reconstituted by the Department of Defense in 1985.

In 1987, Blum was named Executive Officer for the Maryland National Guard Headquarters. A year later, he moved back to the training side, as an Operations and Training Officer. He then became a Brigade Commander in 1992 for the 3rd Brigade, 29th Infantry Division (Light). Moving up the command levels of the 29th Division, Blum eventually was named commanding general in 1999. As part of the Guard's peacekeeping mission in the Balkan states, the Multi-National Division SFOR-10, Operation Joint Forge (Bosnia and Herzegovina) was commanded by Blum in 2001-02. Upon return to the States, Blum became Chief of Staff at US Northern Command, located at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. By 2003, Blum was named Chief, National Guard Bureau.

Blum's tenure as Chief was marked by several changes and the buildup of deployed forces to Iraq and Afghanistan; including Army transformation, the establishment of specialized functions throughout the states, and the formation of a Joint Staff within the National Guard Bureau.

General Craig R. McKinley, U.S. Air Force

General Craig R. McKinley, 2008 -

Craig R. McKinley obtained his Bachelor of Business Administration degree and his commission in 1974 as a distinguished graduate of the ROTC program at Southern Methodist University.

He continued on to student pilot training, Moody Air Force Base, Georgia from 1974-1975. McKinley became a T-38 instructor pilot, first at Craig Air Force Base, Alabama, 1975-1977; then at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, 1979-1980.

McKinley transitioned to other pilot assignments for the 125th Fighter Interceptor Group; Fighter Interceptor Wing and Fighter Wing respectively, in Jacksonville, Florida—first as F-106 alert pilot (1980-1986) as Chief of Safety (1986-1987), then as F-16 instructor pilot (1987-1989). He later served as Commander, 125th Fighter Wing, 1991-1994 and 1995-1996. In the interim time between command assignments, McKinley also attended the National War College, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C. in 1994-1995. He then worked as Air National Guard Vice Commander, Southeast Air Defense Sector, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, 1996, and Commander, Southeast Air Defense Sector, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, 1996-1998.

From 1998-2001, McKinley worked as Deputy Director, Air National Guard, Arlington, Virginia, and Commander, Air National Guard Readiness Center, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. He moved on to an assignment as Commander, 1st Air Force, Air Combat Command, and Commander, Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, 2002-2004. He was then promoted to become Director, Mobilization and Reserve Affairs Directorate, United States European Command, Stuttgart-Vaihingen, Germany, 2004-2005.

McKinley came back to the United States as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C., 2005-2006, and as Director, Air National Guard, Arlington, Virginia, 2006-2008. He serves as Chief, National Guard Bureau, Arlington, Virginia, from November, 2008 to the present. General McKinley is the first reserve component officer to hold the four-star rank, conferred at his inauguration as Chief.

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